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MetroNow Coalition Launches Bus Campaign to Make Bus a Competitive Regional Asset

COALITION PROPOSES IMMEDIATE CHANGES TO PRIORITIZE BUS INVESTMENTS AND IMPROVE REGIONAL COORDINATION

Washington, D.C., December 9, 2019—Each weekday, residents take more than 600,000 trips on buses around the Washington metropolitan area, about the same number of trips made on the Metrorail system. Yet, trips are slow and, too often, unreliable. Today, the MetroNow Coalition is releasing the Bus Campaign Platform that calls on local elected leaders and transportation officials to take immediate action to prioritize bus investments and improve regional coordination.

The Bus Campaign calls for leaders to:

- **Prioritize Buses on Roads** through dedicated bus lanes, queue jumps and transit signal priority at intersections to increase bus speeds and improve reliability.
- **Implement Equitable Fare Policies** through free bus-rail transfers, fare capping and reduced fares for low-income households to remove barriers for low-income riders, especially those who need to commute long distances.
- **Improve Regional Coordination** through the creation of a regional coordinating steward, implementation of an integrated payment system, and the adoption of a regional bus network redesign to create a more efficient and easier to use bus system for riders.
- **Measure and Report on Success** through the adoption and publication of uniform data standards for all bus providers in the region to allow the successes and challenges of the bus to be better understood by providers, elected officials, and advocates.

Bus prioritization on roadways, equitable policies that remove barriers to bus use, regional coordination across providers, and regular reports to monitor progress can improve bus



performance. If Washington area leaders commit to these four tactics, we can create a faster, more reliable, and more equitable bus system that improves regional mobility and increases access to opportunity.

"Building on the momentum behind the Bus Transformation Project, the MetroNow Coalition is calling on the region to implement proven solutions to increase bus speeds and bus reliability," **said former DC Mayor Anthony Williams, CEO and Executive Director, Federal City Council.**

"The Capital Region has the building blocks of a well-performing bus system, but we must work together to take our buses to the next level," **said Jason Miller, CEO, Greater Washington Partnership.** "Imagine if our buses were fast, frequent and able to transport residents where they need to go affordably and on time. This is possible, and the MetroNow Coalition is committed to making the bus a priority and transforming it into a powerful tool to expand economic mobility, lower barriers to opportunity and deliver the world-class transit system we need to compete on the global stage."

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director and Founder of the Coalition for Smarter Growth said, "Buses expand access to jobs and opportunities far beyond the reach of existing Metro stations, offer an alternative to sitting in traffic, and support more walkable communities."

"As someone who has been a single occupancy driver for my entire career, it was quite a revelation for me to serve on the Bus Transformation Project's Executive Steering Committee and realize how much our region's future success depends on truly transforming the way we plan, use and experience our bus system," **said Bob Buchanan, President, The 2030 Group.** "We must rethink the bus not as many local systems but one that is regional, enjoys preferential use of our infrastructure, and is designed to make us all consider bus trips far differently than we have to date."

"The Bus Transformation Project gives the region the opportunity to come together around sound principles and create a seamless, safe, and truly regional system," **said Julie Coons, President and CEO, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce.** "Our Coalition recognizes the many exciting bus projects happening right now and stands ready to help unite those efforts around the region to achieve the goals of the Transformation Project."

"All modes of transportation are needed, and bus rapid transit is especially important. It is a strategic imperative for the growth and prosperity of our region, and it requires a regional approach," **said Jack McDougle, President and CEO, Greater Washington Board of Trade.** "We must continue collaborating and ensure all communities are well served. I ride the bus to



work from Virginia to DC every day and I am grateful to have it as a resource. I encourage others to give it a try as well.”

In Fall 2019, the Bus Transformation Project (BTP) released a strategy document calling for frequent and convenient bus service, bus priority on roads, an excellent customer experience, and a publicly appointed task force to help transform the bus. The BTP strategies complemented recommendations in the Coalition for Smarter Growth’s Metrobus Report Card (2019) and the Greater Washington Partnership’s Rethinking the Bus Brief (2018). However, previous strategic plans from WMATA were never fully implemented. Without a coalition committed to advocating for bus improvements, we risk losing the momentum behind building a better bus system and will see continued declines in bus ridership around the region.

The MetroNow Coalition applauds the inclusion of free transfers between bus and rail in the General Manager’s proposed 2021 WMATA budget. We encourage the WMATA board to adopt these changes to expand access for riders and create a more equitable transit system.

Using the collective voice of the MetroNow Coalition, representing businesses and nonprofits throughout the Washington metropolitan area, we encourage decision makers to fully deploy the campaign’s priority tactics. We all have a role to play to ensure the strategies of the Bus Transformation Project are actually implemented. We know our region deserves a better bus system—the time to act is now.

ABOUT THE METRONOW COALITION

The MetroNow coalition is made up of regional leaders from the business, non-profit and advocacy communities. We came together to ensure that action was taken to put Metro—the backbone of greater Washington’s transportation infrastructure—on a safe, smart, and sustainable path forward. We are dedicated to securing comprehensive improvement of Metro’s governance, funding, and operational structures. We doubled down on our commitment to regional mobility by expanding our mission to include the region’s bus system. Buses expand access to jobs and opportunities far beyond the reach of existing Metro stations, connecting communities that are not served by Metrorail. We know our region deserves a better bus system. The time to act is now. Visit www.MetroNow.com for more information.

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